

155 years of dedicated service: Air Vehicles Directorate loses five engineers

by Melissa Withrow, Air Vehicles Directorate

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio — On September 30, 2004, the Air Vehicles Directorate lost over 155 years of experience with the retirements of Dr. Arnold Mayer, Mr. Terry Harris, Mr. Harold Croop, Mr. Dansen Brown, and Mr. Tom Tighe. These men were with the directorate through its transition from the Flight Dynamics Laboratory, to the Flight Dynamics Directorate, and finally the Air Vehicles Directorate.

Dr. Mayer retired after 31 years of service. At the time of his retirement, he was Principal Aerospace Engineer for the Structural Design and Development Branch and a member of the Multidisciplinary Technology Center. Dr. Mayer was an expert in heat transfer and cryogenics. He was instrumental to the development of the AGM-86 Air Launched Cruise Missile.

Mr. Harris devoted 32 years to the directorate. He made engineering contributions to developing methods for aeroelastic design and wing/store flutter suppression. This research was used to solve wing/store carriage problems in the Navy F/A-18 Hornet. In addition, he was chief of the Vibrations Branch for several years. In this capacity, he oversaw the combined environment acoustic facility, which was used to develop thermal protection system concepts for spacecraft reentry systems.

Mr. Croop made numerous contributions to thermal structures concepts for high speed and space access vehicles during his 33 years with the directorate. He worked on hot structures, thermal protection systems, and leading edges used on aerospace vehicles including the Boost Glide Vehicle, the National Aerospace Plane, and the Space Operations Vehicle.

Mr. Brown was a computer programmer at the directorate for 32 years. During that time, he became a dynamics data analysis and acquisition expert. He developed numerous computer programs that have facilitated data analysis for virtually every test conducted at the Experimental Validation Branch's facilities including in-house, contract, and support efforts.

Mr. Tighe spent 27 years at the directorate. During his career, he was the experimental aerodynamic testing focal point for the X-29A forward-swept wing experimental aircraft demonstrator, the aerodynamic expert for the design and calibration for the Subsonic Aerodynamic Research Laboratory (SARL) wind tunnel, and the senior technical advisor to the experimental aeronautical sciences team.

The Air Vehicles Directorate is grateful for the efforts of these men. Their efforts have been an important part of making the directorate the world-renown organization it is today. They have helped to "Give the Air Force Its Wings." @